Power, Borders, Security, Wealth: Lessons of Violence and Desire from September 11

ANNA M. AGATHANGELOU
University of Houston–Clear-Lake and Global Change Institute

L. H. M. LING
New School University

America’s “war on terror” and Al Qaeda’s “jihad” reflect mirror strategies of imperial politics. Each camp transnationalizes violence and insecurity in the name of national or communal security. Neoliberal globalization underpins this militarization of daily life. Its desire industries motivate and legitimate elite arguments (whether from “infidels” or “terrorists”) that society must sacrifice for its hypermasculine leaders. Such violence and desire draw on colonial identities of Self vs. Other, patriotism vs. treason, hunter vs. prey, and masculinity vs. femininity that are played out on the bodies of ordinary men and women. We conclude with suggestions of a human security to displace the elite privilege that currently besets world politics.

...Today is a week, and seven is of heavens, gods, science.
evident out my kitchen window is an abstract reality.
sky where once was steel.
smoke where once was flesh...

—Suheir Hammad, “first writing since”¹

On September 11, 2001, terrorists struck at the heart of the capitalist world-order. The attack and its targets demonstrated with horrendous efficiency that neither global wealth (World Trade Center (WTC)) nor military might (the Pentagon) could defend against low-tech, human sacrifices when mobilized. For this reason, September 11 has generalized a sense of insecurity that transcends the American state. Three conventions established since the end of the Cold War now seem suspect: for example, “U.S. power reigns supreme,” “borders dissolve in a globalized world,” and “liberal capitalism secures prosperity, democracy, and stability for all.” All ask now: “Whom can we trust?”

¹ Suheir Hammad is the author of Born Palestinian, Born Black and other books. We cite excerpts from her poem, “first writing since,” because they express, poetically, the essence of what we are trying to say in each section of this article.

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We need to broaden these understandings of power, borders, security, and wealth. Charred remains from the WTC and Pentagon compel us to review power as more than just economic or military superiority. Had the terrorists restricted themselves to this traditional, realist notion, they would have needed the backing of a state or access to huge arsenals of military hardware to execute their plan. They relied, instead, on box-cutters and a suicidal guerrilla tactic. Their comrades in the caves of Afghanistan brandished little more than outdated American and Soviet firepower. Similarly, we need to adjust our definition of borders. Many declare geographical demarcations obsolete under the state-straddling, market-binding strategies of neoliberal globalization. Yet September 11 dramatizes the sovereignty of borders in our minds. The terrorists attacked U.S. hegemony to “protect” but actually enclose Islamic culture and religion; likewise, the tragedies in New York and Washington, D.C., have reinscribed borders in the popular American imagination, now translated into a war against terrorism. Assumptions about “national security” and “national wealth” also crumble in light of September 11. How could the world’s richest, most heavily armed state have been so vulnerable?

We offer a postcolonial-feminist framework for understanding these events. It places power relations and identities within historical constructions of race, gender, class, and culture—most recently attenuated by Western colonialism and imperialism—to demonstrate how world politics reflects and sustains the global inequalities that signify daily life. Put differently, postcolonial-feminism theorizes about the material and ideological struggles of historically situated agents in a neoliberal world economy. Categories such as “Third World,” “the West,” “race,” “gender,” and so on are disassembled to promote an understanding and transformation of the transnational forces that shape social relations of power.

Like social constructivism, postcolonial-feminism begins with the premise that we intersubjectively create our worlds. Agents and structures transform each other constantly, especially as they learn survival mechanisms (e.g., “development”) at the interstices of contending world-orders (e.g., “West” vs. “Rest”), producing unanticipated métissage, simulacra, and other hybridities (e.g., “Asian capitalism”). These new meanings and social relations lay the groundwork for transforming old institutions, practices, norms, and values, ultimately compelling a political realization that we are inescapably accountable to others in this world.

Originating from cultural and literary studies, postcolonial theory aims to understand the savage intimacy that developed between colonizer and colonized over long periods of time, yet persistently erased by contemporary social theory. Postcolonial theory de-fictionalizes liberalism’s bordering of the “public” from the “private,” “outside” from “inside,” “group” from “individual,” “East” from “West.” For instance, Stoler (2002) traces the history of race and desire in Dutch-ruled Indonesia. She focuses on complex household arrangements where white colonizers officially mandated a system of superiority and disdain against local natives. Yet the former would not have survived without the latter’s (re)productive labor, especially from nannies, maids, houseboys, gardeners, prostitutes, pimps, soldiers, and other coerced workers for the colonial state. For this reason, Stoler “treats sexual matters not as a metaphor for colonial inequities but as foundational to the material terms in which colonial projects were carried out” (Stoler, 2002: 14). Agathangelou (2004a, forthcoming) links household and empire to the world economy. She finds that the reproductive labor of female migrants from income-
poor states underwrites both household relations (e.g., “maids” and “madams”) and intimacies in other social spaces (e.g., “pimps” and “prostitutes” and “clients”).

The concepts of hypermasculinity and hyperfemininity figure prominently here. Nandy (1988) first coined the term “hypermasculinity” to depict the psychosociocultural effects of British colonialism in India, and the internalization of such radical gender identities by elite Indians as a native counter. As such, hypermasculinity differs from Connell’s (1987, 1995) identification of “hegemonic masculinity.” The latter refers to a tradition of masculinity, whereas hypermasculinity reflects a reactionary stance. It arises when agents of hegemonic masculinity feel threatened or undermined, thereby needing to inflate, exaggerate, or otherwise distort their traditional masculinity. We extend this usage of hypermasculinity to security and economic domains, especially as one hypermasculine source (e.g., U.S. foreign policy) provokes another (e.g., Al Qaeda) to escalate with iterative bouts of hypermasculinity (e.g., “jihad”/“war on terror”).

Hyperfemininity complements hypermasculinity but asymmetrically. Indeed, one is not possible without the other. Hyperfemininity refers to an idealized, radicalized version of traditional femininity. Through systematic, institutionalized exploitation, the patriarchal state sets up hyperfemininity as an ideological alibi to siphon off surplus labor and other resources to sustain its hypermasculinity.

East Asia’s model of capitalism offers one example. As shown by Han and Ling (1998), the South Korean state hypermasculinized its economic objectives (“trade as war!”) throughout the 1960s–1970s to accelerate brutal capitalist accumulation with society’s full support. By reconfiguring itself as a hypermasculinized patriarch, the state turned Korean civil society into the canonical Confucian daughter/wife whose proper mission in life was to sacrifice labor (long working hours), earnings (low wages, tax exemptions for business enterprises, the chaebols), and voice (prohibitions against unions, political dissent) for the good of the national family. Not surprisingly, Korean women sacrificed the most for the least in return.

We extend these insights to notions of power, borders, security, and wealth. They do not reflect objective, compartmentalized categories, as in realist/liberal international relations theory. Nor do they function solely as ideological ramparts to a capitalist economic structure, as in reductionist Marxian analysis. Neither are they some cultural artifact with different meanings for different parties, as suggested by postmodernism. Rather, postcolonial-feminism casts the concepts of power, borders, security, and wealth as the product of a particular set of social relations, inflected by race, gender, class, and culture. Its purpose: to enable neocolonial interest and privilege in world politics. Elites and their lieutenants appeal to the “collective good” to mask such maneuvers. Meanwhile, they exploit the same for labor, resources, and ideological support. Herein lies the system’s inherent contradiction and potential for instability. For this reason, violence and desire become, increasingly, its identifying characteristics. Violence assures elite control along the three axes of power: class-race-gender. Desire motivates it.

Here’s how:

1. Discourse normalizes violence to sustain structural hierarchies of desire. This power narrative must resonate culturally to elicit attention but its logic draws from an ideologically rationalized economic infrastructure. As this paper demonstrates, both “superpower state” (U.S./Bush) and “9/11 terrorists” (Al Qaeda/bin Laden) rely on neoliberalism, if not as discourse

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4 Cynthia Weber (2002) refers to the relation between hypermasculinity and hyperfemininity as a “moral economy of war.”

5 Traditionally, Korean governance—like that in all Confucian-based entities—saw the state as a custodial parent (both father and mother) and society as a child.

6 Here, we combine Gramsci’s concept of hegemony (cf. Femia, 1987) with constructivist notions of intersubjectivity (cf. Ruggie, 1998).
then structure, to fuel their respective campaigns of imperial politics. Globalized militarization serves as one recent example. Both Bush and bin Laden transnationalize their respective militaries, not only to gather more allies by crossing borders but also to propagate an internationalist rhetoric that distracts attention from each camp’s exploitation of the masses economically, politically, religiously, and physically;

2. Borders of our minds secure violence to satiate elite desires for hegemonic politics. Sovereignty and borders may correlate with objective, geographical markers but their significance operates primarily in the mind (cf. Weldes, Laffey, Gusterson, and Duvall, 1999). Peoples and societies did not express legalistic notions of borders or sovereignty until the spread of the Westphalian state-system in the 17th century. Indeed, European colonization proceeded precisely on this lack. Osama bin Laden revitalizes this colonial past to rationalize his hegemonic politics: that is, a religious sovereignty against the “West.” George W. Bush seeks not just national retribution for heinous crimes committed against America but a return to old-fashioned colonialism: that is, (Western, Christian) civilizational discipline against all “terror.” (The Bush administration’s semantic shift from “terrorism” to “terror” offers one small indication of this change from a political to cultural agenda.) Both leaders transgress national, physical boundaries to reinforce their borders of the mind: that is, an “international coalition” against terrorism for Bush; “global jihad,” for bin Laden; and, National desires for security based on neoliberal globalization transnationalizes violence and insecurity. By neoliberal globalization, we refer to the developmental maxims of international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, U.S. Treasury, Citigroup, as well as the central banks of the world’s richest economies. These maxims come in familiar sound bites: for example, “free trade benefits everyone,” “economies need direct foreign investment to develop,” “liberalization and privatization deliver a level playing field,” “governments should not intervene in the economy,” and “markets know best.” Most Arabs/Muslims agree with Osama bin Laden’s allegations of Western cultural annihilation due to neoliberal globalization’s legacy in the Middle East (Waldman, 2001). But neither George W. Bush nor other globalizers could recognize this grievance due to their vested interest in existing infrastructures of power and wealth. At the same time, bin Laden funds his quest for “pure Islam” with riches made from his family’s business contracts with the West, economic enterprises in the Middle East and Northern Africa, as well as the international opium trade (Robinson, 2002). Indeed, he utilizes neoliberal, corporate strategies to design his terrorism campaign. Each camp blurs national security with neoliberal wealth such that one comes to mean the other, regardless of the outcome.

Together, these constructions of privilege legitimate a particular mix of violence and desire. The Bush administration assumes universal acceptance of the non-violability of American sovereignty despite U.S. hegemony in world politics. Bin Laden and Al Qaeda glorify themselves as Islamic “freedom fighters” or “martyrs”

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7 Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton (1999: 89) identify “military globalization” as comprising three components: political (“great power rivalry and conflict”), economic–industrial (“the military production system and trade in arms”), and institutional (e.g., “arms control agreements”). They do not recognize social relations or identities as salient in either militarization or globalization. See Agathangelou (2004b) for an analysis of the relationship between globalization and militarization.

8 For example, the U.S. government insists that its peacekeeping troops should remain immune from prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague given their global policing activities and consequent “vulnerability” to local, political manipulations.
Despite their appropriation of the “Great Satan’s” neoliberal methods. Both use discursive power to normalize radicalizations of identity, such as mutual accusations of “evil,” to serve these ends. Especially affected are those mental borders that govern the identities of daily life: that is, masculinity and femininity, insider and outsider, leader and follower, Self and Other. George W. Bush and the U.S. government invoke violence to protect that American object of desire—a democratic, capitalist way of life—from the likes of Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda network. The latter, in turn, are portrayed as oppressing their own society, generally, and women, specifically. Osama bin Laden seeks the same logic of violence and desire against George W. Bush and the U.S. government: that is, America and the West have “raped and pillaged” the Islamic world for that industrial object of desire: oil. In the process, they have lost their souls.

Each hyper-gendered condition affects the other in unexpected ways. As this article will show, world politics spirals on hypermasculine envy (e.g., who has more power?) as much as hyperfeminine militancy (e.g., Muslim women producing babies for war against the “colonizer”/“infidel,” white women “liberating” native women).

Let us now turn to September 11 and how Bush and bin Laden privilege hypermasculine violence and desire.

Power: Constituting (In)Security

...I do not know how bad a life has to break in order to kill.
I have never been so hungry that I willed hunger
I have never been so angry as to want to control a gun over a pen.
not really, even as a woman, as a Palestinian, as a
broken human being.
never this broken...

Those at the margins of world politics understand violence. They negotiate with it daily. Yet elites, whether led by Bush or bin Laden, exploit violence to affix collective identities, forge a common political project, and subsume dissent. In this way, they deny opportunities for transformation in exchange for more violence.

Nine days after the September 11 attacks, George W. Bush addressed a joint session of Congress to outline America’s “war on terror” and to finger Osama bin Laden as its chief suspect. Bin Laden responded with a videotape broadcasted on October 7 by Al-Jazeera television based in Qatar.

Although from opposing camps, the two speeches share remarkable similarities. Each leader targets the other as the cause of violence and destruction in the world, generally, and against their own country or people, specifically. They declare that the other must be defeated or killed. Each leader presents the national Self as innocent, victimized, virtuous, moral, and rational; the enemy Other, as demonic, murderous, and radically barbaric. Both leaders conclude that militarization must be globalized as the only moral imperative to achieving national security, couched as taking care of one’s own.

Before proceeding further, we must insert a caveat. We recognize that Bush and bin Laden, along with their respective allies, do not occupy parallel positions of power in world politics. Al Qaeda cannot match the economic, political, and military resources possessed by the U.S. government (cf. Roy, 2001). What binds Bush and bin Laden, instead, are mirror strategies of imperial power politics. 9

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9 We note that this notion of “mirror strategies” has been applied to superpower politics during the Cold War. Nonetheless, our approach contributes to this literature in two significant ways: (1) we focus on interactions between a state and a non-state actor, and (2) we integrate race, gender, class, and culture into analyses of politics and economics. We thank one of our anonymous reviewers for helping us clarify this point.
Let us examine how they do so.

Virtue, Truth, and Centrality vs Murderous Envy

For each camp, the Self’s virtue, truth, and centrality incite a murderous envy in the Other. The terrorists hate America, announce Bush, because of their sense of lack:

They hate what we see right here in this chamber, a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other (GWB, 20/9/01)

For bin Laden, “infidels” seek to destroy what they cannot possess: that is, an unwavering, Islamic Self who is endowed with Truth. America is “morally depraved” because it “champion[s] falsehood, support[s] the butcher against the victim, the oppressor against the innocent child” (OBL, 10/7/01). Such hegemony applies even to non-Arabs, non-Muslims. Referring to the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bin Laden charges that “[h]undreds of thousands of people, young and old, were killed in the farthest point on earth in Japan. [For the Americans] this is not a crime, but rather a debatable issue” (OBL, 10/7/01). The faithful will prevail, nonetheless, despite the infidels’ evil tricks. “He whom God guides is rightly guided but he whom God leaves to stray, for him wilt thou find no protector to lead him to the right way” (OBL, 10/7/01).

Innocent Victim vs. Irrational Barbarity

Victimization by this envious, irrational Other demands retributive violence. Bush refers, of course, to the September 11 attacks with its latest tally of 2,801 dead or missing. He presents the U.S. as an innocent bystander to world affairs, now prodded to military action; “Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom” (GWB, 9/21/01). Once roused, the American giant will spare no means to punish its offenders.

Bin Laden portrays all Muslims as innocent victims of U.S. transgressions. Discarded almost casually from the world’s public memory for convenience, America’s acts of transgression are caused for no apparent reason other than raw exertions of power, thoughtlessly applied. For example:

[Islam’s] sons are being killed, its blood is being shed, its holy places are being attacked, and it is not being ruled according to what God has decreed. Despite this, nobody cares.
One million Iraqi children have thus far died in Iraq although they did not do anything wrong.
[Is]raeli tanks and tracked vehicles also enter to wreak havoc in Palestine, in Jenin, Ramallah, Rafah, Beit Jala, and other Islamic areas and we hear no voices raised or moves made.
They [the Americans] bombed Iraq and considered that a debatable issue (OBL, 10/7/01).

Rationality vs. Radicalism

For Bush, the terrorists personify Evil. They seek to shatter the secure, prosperous world-order that America upholds. If the terrorists had a goal, then it is for the abominable purpose of remaking the world into their radical self-image:

10 This figure does not include undocumented workers whose families were afraid to register their missing loved ones with the government, especially in light of federal crack-downs on illegal (or even legal) migrants.
These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life... Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; its goal is remaking the world, and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere (GWB, 9/21/01).

Bush carefully distinguishes Good Arabs/Muslims from Bad Arabs/Muslims. The former are America’s “many Arab friends”; the latter, “a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them” (GWB, 9/21/01). They “blaspheme the name of Allah” (GWB, 9/21/01) by perverting their own people and society in the name of religion:

Afghanistan’s people have been brutalized; many are starving and many have fled. Women are not allowed to attend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough (GWB, 9/21/01).

Bin Laden denounces the American Demon categorically. There are only bad Americans and they pollute the world with an arrogance and hypocrisy that know no bounds:

They came out in arrogance with their men and horses and instigated even those countries that belong to Islam against us. They came out to fight this group of people who declared their faith in God and refused to abandon their religion. They came out to fight Islam in the name of terrorism (OBL, 10/7/01).

**The World Must Choose**

Each demands that the world choose between “Self” or “Other,” “civilization” or “barbarity,” and “the faithful” or “infidels.”

Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists (GWB, 9/21/01).

[There is] one [world] of faith where there is no hypocrisy and another of infidelity, from which we hope God will protect us (OBL, 10/7/01).

**Globalized Militarization Is a Moral Imperative**

Both camps justify globalizing militarization as a moral imperative for attaining their respective desires (national security for Bush, Islamic honor for bin Laden). For Bush, America’s moral imperative stems from Al Qaeda’s attack on home territory. “Americans have known wars, but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941” (GWB, 9/21/01). For Bin Laden, the U.S. deserves September 11. He praises the attackers as a “successful...convoy of Muslims, the vanguards of Islam [whom God] allowed...to destroy the United States” (OBL, 10/7/01). For this reason, justice in any form is acceptable: “May God mete them the punishment they deserve” (OBL, 10/7/01). Let the American Demon now suffer what the Islamic Self has had to endure since colonial times:

What the United States tastes today is a very small thing compared to what we have tasted for tens of years. Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for more than 80 years (OBL, 10/7/01).

Bin Laden issues a promise and a threat:

As for the United States, I tell it and its people these few words: I swear by Almighty God who raised the heavens without pillars that neither the United...
States nor he who lives in the United States will enjoy security before we can see it as a reality in Palestine and before all the infidel armies leave the land of Mohammed, may God's peace and blessing be upon him (OBL, 10/7/01).

We Take Care of Our Own

President Bush establishes a new cabinet-level post, Director of Homeland Security, to protect America and Americans from future terrorist attacks. Evoking a sense of national unity reminiscent of World War II and the Great Depression, the President appeals to the American people to normalize their lives with the following guidelines:

1. **Take care of your family.** “I ask you to live your lives and hug your children.”
2. **Stay loyal.** “I ask you to uphold the values of America, and remember why so many have come here.”
3. **Be tolerant of Others.** “We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith.”
4. **Donate time and money.** “I ask you to continue to support the victims of this tragedy with your contributions.”
5. **Cooperate with law and order.** “The thousands of FBI agents who are now at work in this investigation may need your cooperation, and I ask you to give it.”
6. **Comply with those who seek to protect you.** “I ask for your patience, with the delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security—and for your patience in what will be a long struggle.”
7. **Help the economy by spending money.** “I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy. Terrorists attacked a symbol of American prosperity. They did not touch its source.”
8. **Pray for victims, the military, and the country.** “Finally, please continue praying for the victims of terror and their families, for those in uniform, and for our great country” (GWB, 9/21/01).

Bin Laden urges “…every Muslim [to] rush to defend his religion” (OBL, 10/7/01). He commends the terrorists for sacrificing themselves for their “oppressed sons, brothers, and sisters in Palestine and in many Islamic countries” (OBL, 10/7/01). He concludes: “I ask God Almighty to elevate their [the terrorists'] status and grant them Paradise. He is the one who is capable to do so” (OBL, 10/7/01).

In sum, both Bush and bin Laden set up a dichotomous Self vs. Other to warrant a moral deployment of globalized militarization. As with all dichotomies, this one skews opposed norms, values, and goals such that the first term (Self) always dominates the second (Other). Logic thus prevails that Bush calls for a “war on terror”; bin Laden, a “global jihad.” Each aims to increase national/communal security but, as we will see in the following sections, just the opposite results. Globalized militarization’s first contradiction stems from its premise: transnationalized reinforcements of national borders.

Borders: From National Security to Transnationalized Insecurity

…If there are any people on earth who understand how New York is feeling right now, they are in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip…
Violence, loss, and grief now bind New York with the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The inhabitants of each location may rail against the other as the source of their troubles, yet they are the ones who know only too well the consequences of failing to transform such violence. Their demand for an alternative social and political project, however, is drowned by their leaders’ desire for and execution of “national security,” conventionally defined as sovereign, stable boundaries and identities (Weldes and Saco, 1996; Behnke, 1998; Campbell, 1993, 1998; Neumann, 1999). Insecurity flares whenever that sovereign desire is violated, provoking fears of an external threat and danger usually embodied by the alien, barbaric Other. This projection of the Other occurs within a context of colonial power relations, where race and gender take on cultural or civilizational connotations.

Understandably, the Bush administration seeks to punish the terrorists for perpetrating a heinous crime on American soil. Bush’s soaring rhetoric, though, reveals another layer of desire at work: that is, America needs to discipline/civilize the terrorists precisely because American freedom and democracy, as the apotheosis of modern civilization, motivated their medieval evil. This rhetoric extends beyond a more accurate, technical definition of the September 11 attack as a “crime against humanity,” since the terrorists did not operate on behalf of any state. The Administration pursues, instead, a civilizational justification for its “war on terror.” Bush makes this case explicitly in another speech on November 8, 2001: “We wage war to save civilization, itself” (GWB, 8/11/01). This rhetoric seems almost priestly were not for its prerequisite of penetrating alien societies—for now, with bombs, packets, and propaganda but in the long run, with America’s seminal seeds of democracy, capitalism, and freedom.

Bin Laden also seeks to impale, in order to oust, the West. He views the West/America as a treacherous harlot infecting proud, pure Islam with disease. When asked, in a 1998 interview, what he thought of the West accusing him of terrorism, bin Laden replied with an Arabic proverb: “she accused me of having her malady, then snuck away” (OBL, 1998). Yet bin Laden, too, hyperfeminizes Muslims in order to hypermasculinize them. The West/America has raped Islam civilizationally, he argues, preventing its flowering into a true hegemony. Terrorism thus becomes a cultural cathartic, transforming Muslims from supine victims to virile mujahedeen.

In seeking national/communal security through violence, each camp simply transnationalizes insecurity. This process involves militarizing daily life, gendering a division of labor between state and society, inflicting consequences on the bodies of ordinary men and women, and denying its underlying neocolonialism.

Transnationalizing insecurity means militarizing daily life. As legitimized by Homeland Security, the American state now has the authority to spy on lawyer–client privilege should “terrorism” be associated with the latter. Relatedly, it could dispense with habeas corpus, tap telephones, revoke student or visiting visas, restrict immigration, try alleged terrorists in military tribunals, and so on. Dissent has become criminalized as well. Attorney General John Ashcroft has testified to Congress that “those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty...only aid terrorists” (quoted in Lewis, 2001: A1). Minority groups are pitted against one another as the state curries favor from one, say African Americans, about racial profiling on another, Arab Americans. Bush’s rhetoric of

\[11\text{ Of course, the Administration’s rhetoric also aims to arrest and execute known terrorists and prevent others from joining their ranks. We thank Cynthia Weber for this clarification.}\]

\[12\text{ See, for example, the statement by the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (www.lcpn.org).}\]
battling “civilizations” thus far overrides his distinction of “good” vs. “bad” Arabs/Muslims, rendering it as little more than a public relations ploy.

Bush fuses American national security with American citizenship. After all, American citizens enjoyed a “natural” security, ensured by the country’s continental size and prosperous economy, until September 11 (with December 7, 1941 as the sole exception). Insecurity comes from citizens of “other” states (Krause and Williams, 1997). Furthermore, he equates American patriotism with economic consumption. The fervent shopper defeats the enemy as much as the courageous soldier.

In so doing, the Bush administration silences the complexities of “citizenship.” It denies America’s history of migration and other transnational connections. Additionally, this unified, simplified rendition of citizenship forecloses public contestations of social relations of power and the neoliberal institutions that sustain them.

Bin Laden calls for a militarized, religious agency to reprise Muslims’ collective security. “Islam is calling on you: O Muslims, O Muslims, O Muslims…” (OBL, 3/11/01). Infused with zealotry, Muslims will defeat the American infidels. They are the same “people of the West” who have crusaded against Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, Serbia, southern Sudan, Somalia, Kashmir, the Philippines, and Chechnya. A pattern of “events not as separate links, but as links in a long series of conspiracies, a war of annihilation”—an “immoral act”—has been perpetrated upon Muslims (OBL, 3/11/01). The fight for Islam is unavoidably up close and personal.

**Gendered Division of Labor**

Militarizing daily life genders the state into a national household. For Bush, America’s fight against terrorism is a fight for American values: “Throughout this battle, we adhere to our values” (GWB, 8/11/01). This rhetoric domesticates women, children, and workers who must be protected by hypermasculinized patriarchs like Bush and bin Laden, especially to the “outside,” as regulated by sovereignty’s threshold. Yet it is the silent labor and surplus resources produced by women, children, and servants that enable the hypermasculinized patriarch to execute his (external) duties.

Bush enforces this gendered, national division of labor with a two-step move. First, he hypermasculinizes the state by identifying an internal homeland that needs protection from “outsiders” to achieve security. In casting himself as the vengeful, patriarchal Warrior (“make no mistake”), George W. Bush reconstructs the American public—that is, the civilian population—as the state’s helpful mate/subordinate. Like a dutiful wife, mother, or daughter, civilians should volunteer both service and treasure to aid the national family in crisis.

Second, he hyperfeminizes those within the homeland with his eight guidelines to the American people. Other politicians have advised variations on the same theme: “go shopping” (former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani), “buy that car” (Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle), or “take that trip” (U.S. Senator John Kerry). A television commercial, sponsored by the Travel Industry Association of America, superimposes images of “ordinary folks” from hotels, restaurants, airlines—all the tourism industries that have suffered from the September 11 attacks—repeating Bush’s line that economic consumption “takes care” of the national family.

Read through a postcolonial-feminist lens, these guidelines recall traditional maxims to the law-abiding housewife, concubine, or mistress. Her mission in life: to maintain a happy home for husband and children. Who could disparage such a cozy scenario? Thus society is lulled into adopting a stance of self-sacrifice through expenditure of scarce resources, notable at a time of national recession, rising unemployment, and corporate corruption to service the hypermasculine state.
Migrant, third-world women usually work under such “informalized,” “casualized,” and “flexibilized” conditions, but more male workers may join such ranks as well (Krugman, 2002).

Bin Laden claims to preserve the “true” Islamic nation. His sovereign homeland comes from a way of life guided by conservative Islam. But nowhere in his speeches, interviews, videotapes, or pronouncements does he offer an alternative to oppression, exploitation, hierarchy, intolerance, or poverty. Nor does he articulate an Islamic path to economic development that will improve people’s lives. He offers only an other-worldly vision of Islamic “paradise” attained through “jihad.” Yet bin Laden sees no contradiction between the millions that his family has made from/with the West and his use of this capital to finance an anti-Western terrorism campaign. He seeks, instead, a modern, technically sophisticated economy (especially drawn from the global arms trade), although delinked somehow from the West and its toadies in the Islamic community. Indeed, bin Laden’s Islamic conservatism is predicated on a specific type of privilege where militarized, Muslim men work to protect and benefit from an “Islamic” community that exploits women, children, workers, and tribal minorities.

**Men’s Bodies**

National security and transnationalized insecurity affect men’s bodies most directly on the battlefield. These policies also engender constructions of masculinity. America’s newfound concern for Afghan women, for example, swells a reciprocal appreciation, announces the *New York Times*, for “[b]rawny, heroic, manly men” (Brown, 2001: 5). These are exemplified by “...stoic, muscle-bound [firefighters and police officers]...exuding competence from every pore...” (Brown, 2001: 5).

The venerable newspaper quotes what seems to be a growing, national sentiment: “…there’s a longing for manliness. People want to regain what we had in World War II. They want to believe in big, strapping American boys” (Brown, 2001: 5).

Given the military’s racial segregation during World War II and mainstream America’s general neglect of heroic duty undertaken by its “colored troops,” both African and Asian American, these images implicitly evoke “big, [white] strapping American boys.”

Bin Laden’s call for “martyrdom” effects a similar historical erasure. Men contribute their physical lives to reorder the chaos wreaked by centuries of imperial desires from the West. Women’s purpose is to make such transcendence possible.

[Death] takes on a meaning suffused with “masculinity” because death, power, and political representation are closely intertwined. While death has always been an important motif, in the context of political oppression it becomes a dramatized scene of subjectivity and empowerment...It is through the “otherness” of femininity and its domestication that men gain subjectivity and agency in the scene of martyrdom... Women enter the fundamentalist reconstruction of the

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13 The same adulation does not apply to women leaders. “Paradoxically, while men have been released from tearlessness, it is increasingly expected of women...It’s doubtful, in other words, that leaders like Condoleezza Rice or Hillary Rodham Clinton would get much sympathy if they welled up” (Wax, 2001: 5).

14 Note, for example, HBO’s highly publicized multi-part series, “Band of Brothers.” It details the trials and tribulations of a group of American soldiers (“E Company”) battling Nazis in Europe. In conveying World War II through the eyes of an all-white, all-male cast, the series naturally creates an identification between the viewer and the characters such that World War II—and its eventual victory—becomes seen as a white man’s story only. U.S. defeat in Vietnam shattered this sense of racial and colonial superiority. For this reason, World War II has taken on an “anti-Vietnam syndrome” significance in American popular culture, despite the reversal in time of the two events. That the current U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, represent another racial/ethnic/gender configuration does not efface this class/cultural valorization of white-male heroism since they function as key advisors to and supporters of a hypermasculinized, white-male leader, George W. Bush.
past always in the form of wives, mothers, daughters, not as individuals (Moallem, 1999: 336–337).

Women’s Bodies

Women’s bodies are used, additionally, to mystify the conflicts and contestations that afflict elite privilege. Bush appropriates a liberal feminist understanding of woman to bolster his case against the woman-hating bin Laden/Al Qaeda/Taliban (Bumiller, 2001b: B2). Four white women (Bush administration staff/consultants), with the First Lady in tow, front the Administration’s campaign to “liberate” Afghan women (Marks, 2001). Yet no such commitment preoccupied the Administration before September 11, despite mounting evidence of Taliban misogyny. Afghanistan’s underground women’s organization, the Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women (RAWA), has charged the U.S. government of turning a blind eye to the Taliban’s fundamentalism and misogyny, perhaps even abetted such, to expel the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and secure an oil pipeline through Central Asia (RAWA, 2001). The Bush administration itself admits that women comprised 50% of government workers, 70% of school teachers, and 40% of doctors in pre-Taliban Afghanistan (Bumiller, 2001a: B2).

Despite all this liberating, the female Other remains a silent, inscrutable object of desire. Bush administration promises to the contrary, no women were represented at the post-Taliban, nation-building talks held in Bonn, Germany, in November–December 2001, although two women were appointed to a post-Taliban government. Indeed, contemporary media outlets like National Geographic have popularized an image of the Muslim woman as a half-veiled, muted waif, eyeing the white-male world beseechingly and remotely. This motif reflects a long-standing, Orientalist tradition of treating the female Other as young (underdeveloped), appreciative (subordinate), and tantalizingly mysterious (unknowable) (cf. Ling, 1999).

Bin Laden exploits a more particular form of femininity: that is, the woman as a reproductive machine. Bin Laden and his cohorts assume without question that committed Muslim women will supply human fodder for their cause. A 35-year-old conservative Muslim mother seems to embrace this model of maternal militancy, although one wonders about her true feelings when interviewed by a journalist from the West:

In the name of God, I will sacrifice my son, and I don’t care if he is my most beloved thing. For all of my six sons, I wanted them to be mujahedeen. If they get killed it is nothing. This world is very short. I myself want to be a mujahid. What will I do in this world? I could be in heaven, have a weekly meeting with God (quoted in Addario, 2001: 38).

Hypermasculine certainty masks an underlying insecurity. Muslim women’s very status as objects of desire—that is, as mothers who reproduce sons—renders them vulnerable to rape by “infidels.” As Patricia Molloy (1999: 306) has noted, “it is through desire, [understood as] the self’s relation with the Other, that security is lived...[W]arfare functions as not only a gendered, but a racialized practice of securing desire.” An unspoken logic ensues: the more radical conservatives like bin Laden...

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15 The Bush administration rewarded the Taliban with $43 million when it announced a ban on opium production in July 2000 (Ehrenreich, 2001).
17 At the same time, the Bush administration is eroding its own commitment to federal agencies and offices devoted to women’s issues. See Lewin (2001).
18 For a discussion of this popular culture image of the Muslim woman, see Ling (2004).
Laden and the Taliban reduce women to little more than baby-breeders, the more they need to war against a mythologized, rapist white-male West/America.\(^{19}\) Herein lies bin Laden’s terrorism campaign veiled as the path to “paradise.”

A reverse logic operates as well. The more the West and America demonize radical Muslims as mythical misogynists, the more they need to “liberate” not just women but whole societies from Islam. Herein lies Western/American colonialism reframed as “secularization,” “democratization,” “regime change,” and “nation-building.”

**Colonial Selves vs. Others**

Race, gender, class, and culture have long marked international relations. Abouali Farmanfarmaian (1992: 116) explored this legacy of “colonialism, whiteness, identity” in the senior Bush’s 1992 Gulf War. Sire to today’s “war on terror”/“jihad” in more ways than one, the Gulf War replayed a “national fantasy, with all its fears, anxieties, desires, and excitements” (Farmanfarmaian, 1992: 111). Centering on themes of “miscegenation, family, and manhood,” this national fantasy (like today’s) pitched the U.S. as a “righteous protector of the world against ‘Iraq as an evil destructive force’” (Farmanfarmaian, 1992: 112, 113). Rape became the overwhelming motif: the “rape of Kuwait” extended to accusations of sexual atrocities by Iraqi soldiers against local women as well as thousands of Filipina and South Asian migrant workers in the country.

A postcolonial-feminist analysis reveals another source of violence and desire at work. Here, George Bush’s hunting and Wild West metaphors prove instructive. “Hunt them [the terrorists] down,” he has proclaimed famously, “Smoke ‘em out.” Bin Laden and his followers are “Wanted: Dead or Alive.” To probe their implications, we draw on Brian Luke’s psycho-social–sexual deconstruction of hunting. He finds a pattern of “anticipation, desire, pursuit, excitement, penetration, climax, and satiation” (Luke, 1998: 635), as conveyed by this dream from an all-time elk hunter:

I...see elk before me, around me, moving everywhere, big dark shapes in the trees, along with their calves of the year. I raise the rifle, wanting to fire, but also wanting to wait...I walk among them. They aren’t afraid, and behind me one of the cows rubs her flank against me. She doesn’t smell like elk—dry and musky. She smells washed and clean. When I turn around she drops her coat and becomes a naked woman, pressing herself to me and pushing me down. Her skin is the creamy color of wapiti rump, her breasts are small...As she bends her head to my chest and tries to take off my shirt, I lift her chin. Her eyes are wet and shining, and I can’t tell if she is about to laugh or to cry. I put my hand behind her head pulling her face toward me for a kiss, when I see the elk hide under my nose in the dawn (quoted in Luke, 1998: 637).

For Bush and the U.S. government, the pursuit of bin Laden and Al Qaeda (re)invigorates a sense of American manliness. Lost in the bravura is an examination of the relationship between hunter and prey. The hunter becomes a lethal lover of the hunted; indeed, the prey allows a manly life. But consummation comes only when the hunter annihilates his prey. This cycle of love and extinction dooms the hunter to remain forever unrequited, pathologically chasing after his elusive object of desire. No less a psychologically adept, power-monger like Adolf Hitler has acknowledged as much: that is, the insecurity behind manly hunting due to the hunter’s dependency on his prey. Hitler even projects ridicule from prey to

\(^{19}\) For this reason, female suicide bombers may not enjoy the same kind of approbation from their communities as their male counterparts.
hunter, as revealed in a conversation taped by Martin Bormann (Hitler’s Table Talk). Hitler jokes that while "[t]he joy of killing brings men together [i]t’s lucky we don’t understand the language of hares. They might talk about you something like this: ‘He couldn’t run at all, the fat hog!’” (quoted in Boxer, 2001: 5).

When placed in a colonial context, hunting’s anxious eroticism exposes the trappings of racialized privilege. The “great white hunter,” armed with his killing technologies, must rely on “natives” to carry his equipment, set up camp, scout the territory, track the prey, then skin it for display and/or butcher it for eating. The “great white hunter” simply shoots the animal. Given this precarious asymmetry, the “great white hunter” must convince himself—and the natives who outnumber him—that only he can use the killing technologies. The natives must be convinced that they are too primitive, stupid, irresponsible, or scared to take up the gun, the grenade, the gas, or the bomb. Otherwise, the native could direct these killing technologies to the “great white hunter” just as easily as the hapless prey.

Now, the neocolonial prey also wants blood. Colonial fantasies provoke a “reactionary reverie” in the Other, dreaming himself into a vengeful “Warrior Prince” (Ling, 2002: 46). Too long the emasculated prize of predatory colonizers, he, too, trucks in violence and desire, security and insecurity to declare his public hypermasculinity. Bin Laden’s Warrior Prince is motivated less by fleshly consummation in the here-and-now than with the promise of that final, orgiastic bliss in Paradise with “72 black-eyed virgins.” Note this Pakistani man’s regret at the end of the Taliban regime:

We went to the jihad filled with joy, and I would go again tomorrow…If Allah had chosen me to die, I would have been in paradise, eating honey and watermelons and grapes, and resting with beautiful virgins, just as it is promised in the Koran. Instead, my fate was to remain amid the unhappiness here on earth (quoted in Burns, 2002: A1).

For this reason,

[the death of a martyr is routinely announced in the Palestinian press not as an obituary but as a wedding. “The Wedding of the Martyr Ali Khadr Al-Yassini to the Black-Eyed in Eternal Paradise,” said an invitation carried a few weeks ago in lieu of a death notice in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, an Arafat-controlled paper. The same nuptial theme emerges in the eve-of-battle instructions presumed to have been written by Mohamed Atta, a supposed leader of the Sept.11 attacks. “You should feel complete tranquillity, because the time between you and your marriage in heaven is very short,” Atta assured his accomplices (Lelyveld, 2001: 51).

In sum, national/communal security ends up supporting a transnationalized insecurity that militarizes daily life. As the U.S. extends its reach internationally to capture terrorists, its grip tightens domestically for the same purpose. We are witnessing a simultaneous militarization of the global and the local, international law and civil liberties, terrorist and citizen. A gendered division of labor deepens such militarization by institutionalizing colonial divisions of power and privilege between Self and Other.

Neither Bush’s nor bin Laden’s rhetoric stems from “unmediated discursive spaces…[They are, instead] haunted by the phantoms and monsters of modernity…with their own horizons and contradictions” (Moallem, 1999: 339). Bush’s rhetoric celebrates modernity while bin Laden’s seeks to destroy it. Yet both aim to “contain and make manageable the chaotic situation arising from the basic contradictions of the same modernity” (Moallem, 1999: 339). Bush continues this project in the Judeo/Christian capitalist tradition, bin Laden, with radical Islamic conservatism. Two, unrequited hunters result, perpetually stalking yet needing
each other. Meanwhile, this privileged hypermasculine death chase tramples the bodies of ordinary men and women. Such contradictions converge most apparently and pervasively in transnationalized economies of desire under neoliberal globalization.

Security/Wealth: Militarization and Economies of Desire

…but I know for sure who will pay.

in the world. It will be women, mostly colored and poor.

Women will have to bury children, and support themselves through grief...

[the World Bank] has condemned people to death.


Neoliberal economics enables globalized militarization. It exploits the state’s monopoly of violence to entrench economic desire by: (1) rationalizing the private consumption of products and people as a public good, (2) commodifying and (re)colonizing third-world labor, generally, and women, specifically, to transnationalize production at relatively low costs, and (3) institutionalizing racism, sexism, and neo-colonialism to deflect and distract social dissent (Agathangelou, 2002; cf. Agathangelou and Ling, 2003). Agents of globalization, such as multinational corporations, the media, and the nationalist state, seamlessly transition from “freedom” to “consumption” (Firat and Dholakia, 2000), all the while militarizing middle-class life. Although ostensibly anti-Western, bin Laden and his cohorts also militarize neoliberal desire industries to journey from “jihad” to “Paradise.”

Neoliberalism and Post-Cold War Insecurities

The end of the Cold War intensified economic insecurities even as it relaxed superpower-induced, political ones. Socialism’s retreat as a material and ideological threat allowed the newly unfettered owners of corporate capital—the “Wall Street-Treasury-IMF Complex” (Wade and Veneroso, 1998)—and its technological-managerial elite to abrogate an earlier, social contract with workers, initiated in the aftermath of World War II, for a rapidly, globalizing market system. Reagan-Thatcher “hyperliberalism” (Cox, 1987) in the 1980s facilitated this global restructuring of national institutions, the military, and their international partners with large-scale, governmental deregulation. High-income inequalities and polarities now afflict the world, especially those who are neither white, male, professional, nor Western (Marchand and Runyan, 2000; World Bank, 2001; Galbraith, 2002). Today, a citizens’ movement around the world—which the media have labeled “anti-globalization”—signals a new era of class, gender, and racial discontent. An ultimate insider like Joseph Stiglitz, former Chief Economist at the World Bank, admits that international financial institutions, governed by the central banks of the world’s richest economies, seek only to fatten their own treasuries rather than improve people’s lives (Stiglitz, 2002). Not by coincidence did...

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20 Giroux (2001), for instance, finds the rise of an “industrial–prison” complex a common, militarized response to racial and economic pressures in American society.

21 As George (2002) notes, “successive UN Development Programme Human Development Reports or the UNCTAD Trade and Development Reports [that] the top 20 percent of the world population now indeed holds more than 80% of the wealth; the bottom 20% makes do on slightly over one percent.”

22 According to George (2002), this citizens’ or social movement is more accurately identified as “opposed to market-driven corporate globalization but [it is] not ‘anti-globalization’ per se, which would be pointless: clearly technology and travel are bringing us closer together and this is all to the good. [The movement is], instead, anti-inequity, anti-poverty, anti-injustice as well as pro-solidarity, pro-environment and pro-democracy.”
the September 11 terrorists target America’s two leading institutions of wealth and power.

Such violence inheres in neoliberal globalization. Charlotte Hooper (2001), for instance, finds a consistent application of predatory, white-male heterosexuality to global business in one of neoliberal globalization’s premier media outlets: The Economist. One article (15 January 1994) paean “Myanmar’s rich resources” as “ripe for rape” for Western businessmen (quoted in Hooper, 2001: 139). Just as George Bush subliminally sexualizes terrorists as violable prey, so The Economist constructs global business as another colonial adventure for hypermasculine plunder and privilege. Woman-nature-culture, especially from the third-world, serve as sexualized, racialized instruments of use or pleasure for these globetrotting, money-making “captains” of industry.

Not surprisingly, women, immigrants, and minorities endure the worst jobs at the lowest pay under neoliberal globalization (Sassen, 1998). They also face the most abusive and systematic forms of collective violence: “urban terrorism from the extreme right and left, racist attacks, Islamic bombings, gang shootings, death squads, riots, vigilantism, human rights abuses, vigilante lynchings, political assassinations, kidnappings, police shootings, high-tech security harassments, private justice making, civil disobedience, shantytown eradication, and soccer hooliganism” (Holston and Appadurai, 1996: 200). Paradoxically, industrialized economies have increased subsidies to immigration and other policing institutions to “secure” economic, political, and cultural borders even while transnationalizing them (Agathangelou, 2004a).

Bin Laden and Al Qaeda draw on one desire industry, opium, to advance their visions of justice and equality. When the U.S. bombed Afghanistan in October 2001, the Taliban reneged its earlier ban on opium and doubled its production, processing, and sales (McCarthy, 2001). Afghanistan accounted for 70% of the world’s opium crop, reaping $40–50 million a year in revenues (Emery, 2001; Epstein, 2001). Yet the country’s economy and society showed few benefits from its opium earnings. Instead, the Taliban tapped into the global arms trade and, by extension, the rest of the neoliberal economic order.

Indeed, bin Laden exploits the very violence and desire offered by the neoliberal order that he claims to reject as a means of satiating his desire for an Islamic paradise on earth. To Cynthia Weber, Al Qaeda’s strategies for holy war show a decidedly neoliberal, corporate bent:

Just as a KFC [Kentucky Fried Chicken] franchise succeeds by enticing customers through efficient service and with products that their competitors have yet to think of, so too does Al Qaeda seem to function by providing a product (an Islamic fundamentalist ideology turned terrorist) to meet customer demand through technological efficiency (training programs that enable ‘employees’ to perform one or more specific tasks in the ‘production process’) and forward thinking (transforming Hollywood-like scripts into actual events) (Weber, 2002: 142).

Weber further analogizes Al Qaeda to a dot.com business. A “mobile network of connections of cash and carriers,” the Al Qaeda terrorists are “located everywhere...[and] nowhere” at the same time (Weber, 2002: 143).

Not content to conflate patriotism with consumerism, the Bush administration aims for more in the neoliberal tradition. Explaining the administration’s hiring of a Madison Avenue advertising guru, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell made the point quite explicitly: “[We want to] sell[! a product [to the Arab world]. That product we are selling is democracy” (quoted in van Ham, 2002: 250).

In sum, neoliberal globalization in the post-Cold War world has increased both markets and insecurity in the world. Bush and bin Laden alike rationalize one in terms of the other.
Conclusion

...and if there is any light to come,

it will shine from the eyes of those who look for peace

and justice.

after the rubble and rhetoric are cleared, and the phoenix

has risen...

Suheir Hammad calls for peace and justice by highlighting our common suffering under violence. As this article has shown, it is elite privilege—whether in the interest of neoliberal global capitalism or radical conservative Islam—that underpins such violence. Privilege does so by narrating a particular set of social relations into power. In the case of Bush and bin Laden, we find a commodification of social life (“shopping” for Bush, “suicide bombers” for bin Laden), militarization of public space (“war on terror” for Bush, “jihad” for bin Laden) colonization of male and female bodies (“citizen-soldiers” for men, “liberator-breeders” for women), and displacement of grass- root visions of democratic life (cross-cutting interests, coalitions, and alliances).

We have the freedom to “make a world with Others” (Wendy Brown quoted in Bertsch, 2002: 214). Exercising this freedom will not only break the vicious cycle of fear and violence driven by unrequited, unspoken desires. It will enable, also, a more democratic participation in transforming current submissions to hypermasculine violence and desire into a human security that provides for the needs of the majority of this world.

Toward this end, our analysis reveals two strategies of “social domestication and colonization” (Baudrillard, 1993) in world politics today: (1) a discursive production of desire linking patriotism to privilege that (2) deflects attention to or dissent from an underlying political economy of exploitation and violence. Three preliminary steps may help to loosen these strangleholds of violence and desire, thereby allowing alternative concepts, strategies, and coalitions to emerge. To begin, we must recognize the Self’s intersubjective complicity with the Other in upholding privilege in power politics, and the accountability that such an admission demands. This recognition requires new approaches to public discourse, basic concepts, and economic structure.

Public Discourse

We need to reframe Self–Other identities and relations. Despite disparate power positions, both Bush/America and bin Laden/Al Qaeda share responsibility for hypermasculinizing security and insecurity, with its connotations for race, gender, class, and culture branded on the bodies of men and women. This fatal mirroring denies the Self’s history of socio-economic intimacies with the Other. It also prohibits each from acknowledging damages inflicted on the Self as well as the Other. Breaking this impasse requires a Self-shattering admission: its complicity with the Other. For the U.S./Al Qaeda Self/Other, a dual inquiry, each internally directed, must ensue: the U.S. into its foreign policy greed in the Middle East (cf. Chomsky, 2001); bin Laden/Al Qaeda/Taliban, their associations with “the enemy,” whether through the CIA or the opium trade (cf. Robinson, 2002).

Self-interrogations must also ensue. Americans, for example, need to question why evil terrorists have “weapons of mass destruction” while the U.S. government deploys “smart bombs,” “daisy cutter” bombs, 10-ton bombs, and other instruments of death, usually unloaded on populations already devastated by poverty, disease, and despair (Egan, 2002). Similarly, conservative Muslims need to critique demagoguery disguised as spiritual leadership. Why is salvation gained
only through death, especially of ordinary folks and rarely the leaders? How are the rewards distributed—not in heaven but this earthly life? Neither camp can claim, in short, “I am innocent.”

We must scrutinize structures of privilege that protect certain definitions of “leadership,” “patriotism,” and “devotion.” Critical voices in both camps must ask: “Who benefits from, and who pays for, the sacrifices required by all this militarizing and globalizing?” This question extends to the household and its complicity with empire. How do relations of dominance in both suppress conflicts of interest that uphold their common legitimacy?

**Basic Concepts**

Let us (re)consider visions of security and insecurity, state and nation, violence and desire. Concepts and narratives that bind us to the reactionary patriarchal household, hunting, and other acts of hypermasculinity seem to fulfill national desires for the Self but actually exploit and persecute hyperfeminized Others, both internal and external.

For example, what is the relationship between economic development and national security? Agathangelou (2004a) examines how “economically peripheral states” in the Mediterranean like Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey import migrant labor to comply with the neoliberal, competitive policies of the “economically core states” in the European Union. At the same time, these states justify an elaborate national security apparatus to keep out the migrant Other, with Turkey now serving as a “security buffer zone.” This development-security dualism applies to other parts of the world as well. Mexicans, for instance, have migrated historically to the Western and Southwestern regions of the U.S. to work in labor-intensive industries. The U.S. government narrates a national security need to “patrol” these border regions while turning a blind eye to those who employ these “illegal migrants,” in the first place.

We also need to learn postcolonially. That is, how do we transform concepts of security and insecurity, state and nation, violence and desire at the interstices of contending world-orders. Such conceptual transformations exist in the margins (e.g., women’s approaches to conflict resolution) but rarely do they find a critical mass given the elite’s monopoly on public discourse. Only by bringing in these heterodox voices, ideas, and agendas to engage the ruling orthodoxy could we devise a majority-based understanding of human security. Nonetheless, those who sacrifice most for hypermasculine power politics (women, workers, colonized peoples) cannot—should not—shoulder the entire burden of convincing elites to think and act otherwise. Rather, let us focus our energies on forging transnational alliances, both cultural and material, to make “another world possible” (George, 2002).

**Economic Structure**

Elite privilege must be challenged. The few feast off the many in the current symbiosis of national security with transnationalized neoliberal insecurity (Escobar, 2001). Bush and bin Laden both fuse the logic and desire of capital with the nation-state to produce exclusionary practices of consumption as citizenship. Bush appeals to a Self/subjectivity that needs consumption to boost the economy even when it/the world smolders in fire and destruction. Bin Laden’s vision of the Islamic community excludes women and laborers as individuals yet requires their inclusion as “selfless others.” We need, in short, an emancipatory approach to globalization.

This is happening already. Note, for example, the rise in popular protests at World Bank/International Monetary Fund/World Trade Organization meetings as well as surging participation in the World Social Forum (WSF), held in protest against the
World Economic Forum (WEF). Not just a rag-tag hippie movement, as some would dismiss it, the WSF signals the spread of alternative capitalisms undertaken by men and women on a daily basis to benefit from, not just service, the market.

Of particular interest here are efforts by women’s and other peace organizations to intervene in conflict resolution and crisis prevention (e.g., Pakistan–India, Sudan, Northern Ireland, Cyprus). A number of such groups operate in bin Laden’s own backyard: e.g., Women in Black (Israel), Mothers Against Silence (Israel), Jerusalem Link, the Saturday Mothers (Turkey), Women in Black (Serbia), SOS Femmes En Detresse (Algeria), l’Association Marocain pour les droits des femmes (Morocco), l’Union de l’action Feminine (Morocco), the Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region (AWMR), the Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan (RAWA). Women’s labor unions have expanded, as well, cross-national feminist networks precisely due to their common exploitation and oppression under neoliberal globalization (Moghadam, 1999, 2001). Labor unions and other groups not usually identified with a feminist agenda now have reason to ally with women’s organizations. Such linkages subvert hypermasculine violence and desire by engaging demarcated camps of hostility. They provide one venue for unraveling Self/Other hostilities along with the privileges that have been accruing to a minority, whether superpower state or radical Islamic conservatism, at the expense of the majority.

Need for Method

These three steps toward human security—discourse, concepts, and structure—require a new method of analysis. How we study a subject not only defines it but also affects our findings. In his 2003 presidential address at the International Studies Association (ISA) meeting in Portland, Steve Smith (this issue) identified ten major assumptions of mainstream international relations (IR) that perpetuate, even if unintentionally, the dichotomized world of Self vs. Other that incites events like September 11.

These assumptions, we suggest, uphold an elite privilege in IR pedagogies. It denies, marginalizes, or exiles alternative voices and identities, like Hammad’s, that challenge established boundaries of community, self, and security. We need to hear these alternative stories. In the telling, they sometimes redefine the rules and roles of those who claim to speak for and from them, in ways previously considered “rationally” unimaginable. These interventions, like Hammad’s, account for the changing understandings and social relations of transnationalized insecurities needed for a human security that respects and provides for the world’s majority, rather than its elite minority.

Need for Accountability

Smith critiques IR to call for an ethic of responsibility in analysis and practice. He analogizes our production of concepts, theories, and methods in IR to the “singing”
of Australian aborigines. They believe that, during “dream-time,” they literally “sing their world into existence” (Smith, this issue). Not only does this metaphor underscore our agency in world-making (cf. Onuf, 1989), it also carries an implicit note of caution:

[IR scholars] sing our worlds into existence, yet rarely reflect on who wrote the words and the music, and virtually never listening out for, nor recognizing, voices of worlds other than our own until they occasionally force us into silence (Smith, this issue).

Herein lies postcolonial-feminism’s contributions. It takes as given that we need to understand the music, the words, and the multiple voices that sing into existence not one but various worlds. Postcolonial-feminism adds another insight: that is, how violence and desire—infused as they are with race, gender, class, and culture—script these world-making operas, awing us into a mournful silence that alchemizes, over time, into a righteous, murderous rage. Most importantly, postcolonial-feminism stresses our political accountability in this world. That is, whose desires are privileged and whose needs are sacrificed under this regime?

Violent definitions of love for country, religion, or way of life bear far-reaching consequences for all. As Manos Hatjidakis has cautioned: “When you see the monster approaching and you cannot recognize it, it is because you are beginning to resemble it.”26 When violence becomes desire, we face true terror and no amount of homeland security or righteous martyrdom will protect us from it.

References


26 Author’s translation from the original Greek. Manos Hatjidakis is a famous writer, singer, and intellectual in the Greek-speaking world. Ling (2004) examines the monster theme in the current war on terror as reflected in popular culture icons like Fu Manchu and Hannibal Lecter.